

Holy Cross Parish Hall
Original St. Patrick's Church
Eddy Street between Scott and Divisadero
San Francisco, San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CAL-1908

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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HOLY CROSS PARISH HALL
ORIGINAL ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH

San Francisco, San Francisco County, California

ADDRESS: North side of Eddy Street between Scott and
Divisadero Streets.

OWNER: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of California

OCCUPANT: Holy Cross Parish

USE: Educational and Social

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This building was the original St. Patrick's Church, said to have been prefabricated and shipped around the Horn ca. 1851; and erected on Market Street on lot #23 between Second and Third Streets, at which location, also, was an Orphan Asylum (CAL-1233). When the site became part of a land purchase for the Palace Hotel at about the same time that New St. Patrick's was built in 1870 on Mission Street between Third and Fourth Streets, the building was moved in 1873 to Eddy Street between Octavia and Laguna and reconsecrated as St. John the Baptist Church. It was again moved in 1891 to its present site on Eddy Street between Scott and Divisadero Streets and became the first Holy Cross Parish Church. When the present Holy Cross Church was completed in 1899, it became Holy Cross Parish Hall.

The building is of a modest Classical Revival design, a rare survivor of the early 1850's in San Francisco. It retains the original character and detail except that windows have been installed over the entrance interrupting the corona of the pediment; and glazing of windows has been changed. The interior, also, has been altered to accommodate its new function.

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The early history of this interesting old building is beset with disputed fact. Luke Carroll, official historian of the Holy Cross Parish, says in his book on this subject (Holy Cross Parish and Lone Mountain District of San Francisco, p. 14): "On the night of December 6, 1850, shortly after his consecration as Bishop of Monterey and Alta California, the Right Reverend Joseph Sadoc Alemany, O.P., D.D., arrived in San Francisco and found in existence two churches-- St. Francis Mission Church (Mission Dolores) and St. Francis Church, Vallejo Street, the parish church of the City (present structure, 1859-60, rebuilt, largely interiorly, after the fire of 1906). After a brief visit of eight days, the Bishop left for his Episcopal seat at Monterey to begin his work. From there he sent Father John Maginnis to San Francisco, where on June 9, 1851, another parish was established. Services were held every Sunday for three months in a house rented for the purpose at the corner of Third and Jessie Streets. On the first Sunday of September the church known as St. Patrick's, facing on Market Street between Second and Third, in what was known as Happy Valley, the present site of the Palace Hotel, was dedicated... The growth of the city was rapid and a corresponding growth in Catholic activity kept pace until in this year, 1854, a new and more commodious St. Patrick's Church was erected to replace the temporary one. The material for this new structure, it is said, was brought around the Horn in a sailing vessel. It was builded well."

The 1854 San Francisco Directory, p. 231, has a long entry for St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, School and Orphan Asylum. The entry says: "Located in Happy Valley, San Francisco. Founded on the 9th day of June, 1851. A house was rented on the corner of Third and Jessie, in which mass was said for three months. On the 1st of September (the first Sunday would have been the 7th of September), mass was celebrated in the building now occupied and known as St. Patrick's Church. A school was established at the same time that the Church was opened at the corner of Third and Jessie Streets, in the same building, which was also removed to the Church building on the 1st of September. The site of the present Church building is on a 100 vara lot, No. 23, between Second and Third Streets, fronting on Market--the most spacious street in the City." From this evidence, it would seem that the building built in 1851 ¹ (occupied September 1st, not 7th as Carroll suggests)² is the same building which Carroll claims was replaced in 1854 by a "new and more commodious St. Patrick's".

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Either Carroll misread the Directory's facts, or he used some less reliable source for his assertion that a new building was constructed in 1854. The principal visual evidence for the early history of the church building is the Fardon photograph (uncertainly dated to 1855 or 1856) of that area of Happy Valley. This clearly shows the wooden building under consideration in this report, with the more fashionably Italianate Orphan Asylum to the east along Market Street. A lithograph of the Mechanics Institute pavilion, at the first fair held in 1857, also shows the Orphanage and St. Patrick's wooden church in the background. Neither of these pieces of visual evidence, of course, are conclusive proof of when the wooden church was actually built-- in 1851 or 1854. Lot 23 on Market Street would appear to occupy a position west of the present New Montgomery Street, near the east side of Annie Street - on the site of the Palace Hotel.³ It was undoubtedly to make way for the new hotel that the old wooden church was moved to a new site; furthermore, the "new" St. Patrick's on Mission Street was finished in 1870⁴, and made specific use of the old church with its dedication unnecessary. The move from the old site, in 1873, was by a round about route⁵ to a new site on Eddy Street, between Octavia and Laguna - where the church was rechristened St. John the Baptist Church. It was used as a pro-Cathedral by Archbishop Riordan from 1885 to 1891. When the new Roman Catholic Cathedral on Van Ness Avenue (burned 1962) was completed in that year, the little wooden church was moved again to its present location on the north side of Eddy, between Scott and Divisadero. Here it served as Holy Cross Parish Church until 1899, when the present Holy Cross Church was completed.⁶ Nestling on the east side of the larger stone church, it is used as a Parish Hall for social and educational purposes. There have been minor exterior and more radical interior modifications; but the essential character of the building still reflects the 1850's.

On the front of the church, to the right of the main door, is a metal plaque with the following inscription: "Holy Cross Sunday School Hall Oldest Frame Church Building in San Francisco. The Original St. Patrick's Church Built in 1854 Upon the Present Site of the Palace Hotel From Materials Brought Round the Horn. Moved to Eddy Street and Served as Pro-Cathedral 1885 to 1891. Moved to Present Location in 1891 Where It Became Holy Cross Parish Church Until 1899 - One Hundred Years Of Service Have Been Completed. Marker Placed By Native Daughters Of The Golden West June 20, 1954".

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NOTES (Historical Information)

1. Mary Goodrich, The Palace Hotel, p. 28 confirms this (more or less, see note 3 here): "across the street from the Grand Hotel there had stood since 1851 the Roman Catholic Church of St. Patrick and an orphan asylum."
2. This error would seem to have come from Charles Warren Stoddard's In the Footsteps of the Padres (enlarged edition of 1912, p. 96), where he says: "dear old St. Patrick's - which was dedicated on the first Sunday of September 1851". The Directory which is a more reliable source specifically refers twice to the 1st of September, not the first Sunday of September (the 7th).
3. Asbury Harpending had first conceived of a street south from Market to service a new area of business; he began acquiring property at high values in the late 1860's. He was soon joined by Ralston, and in 1869-70, they erected the Grand Hotel, across New Montgomery Street (east) from "old" St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum. The final price of the property needed for the Palace Hotel was \$1,000,000 - a block of two acres (Goodrich, The Palace Hotel, pp. 26-28), although Lewis and Hall, Bonanza Inn, p. 18, state it was \$400,000, and two and one-half acres of land. There was a high sand dune at the corner of New Montgomery Street which intervened between the street and the site of the Orphan Asylum and the "old" St. Patrick's. This sand had to be removed for the new hotel's foundations.
4. The cornerstone for "new" St. Patrick's, a brick Gothic church burned in 1906 and restored after the fire, was laid on September 26, 1869. Carroll, op.cit., p. 14, says that "old" St. Patrick's remained "under its original title until 1872, when it was superseded by the Gothic brick church which stands today on Mission Street"; this would imply that the "new" church was not consecrated until 1872, although it was physically completed earlier. The Palace Hotel was begun in 1873.
5. Mr. Roy Graves, veteran historian of San Francisco, has suggested it might have been moved by the so-called "bicycle route" - a relatively flat route via Mission, 16th, Church, etc., to its new site, although this seems somewhat circuitous.

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6. Carroll, op. cit., p. 39, gives the following details: "The new Cathedral (on Van Ness Avenue) was completed, the cornerstone of which had been laid on May 1, 1887, and the dedication took place on January 11, 1891. St. John's was then abandoned. This latter happened opportunely for Holy Cross. St. John's was a much larger building than the old Holy Cross in the (Calvary) Cemetery and Father (John F.) McGinty negotiated for it, had it cut into two sections to facilitate its moving, and on March 12, 1891, a contract was recorded for this work between J. F. McGinty and James J. Manseau to put St. John's Church on its present site for the sum of \$1895.00'...(it was opened) on Sunday May 24th, 1891...historic St. Patrick's replaced the historic Holy Cross. Repainted and redecorated, surrounded by flowers and shrubs, it was made attractive."

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

- Baird, Joseph A., Jr., Time's Wondrous Changes: San Francisco Architecture, 1776-1915, San Francisco, California Historical Society, 1962, pp. 13, 45; plate 16.
- Benet, James, San Francisco and the Bay Region, New York, Random House, 1963, p. 162.
- Carroll, Luke M., Holy Cross Parish and Lone Mountain District of San Francisco, San Francisco, privately printed, 1937, pp. 14, 15, 39; and un-numbered plates.
- Goodrich, Mary, The Palace Hotel, San Francisco, privately printed, 1930.
- Lewis, Oscar and Hall, Czrroll, Bonanza Inn, New York, Knopf, 1939.
- San Francisco Directory, 1854, p. 231.
- Stoddard, Charles Warren, In the Footsteps of the Padres (enlarged edition), San Francisco, Robertson, 1912, p. 96.
- The Monitor, October 9, 1959, p. 4.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

The original appearance of the building can be studied in the Fardon photograph of St. Patrick's Church and Orphan Asylum of 1855 or 1856.

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The one story structure of wood, framed and sheathed with approximately twenty foot high walls, rested on a low foundation. The entrance was directly on the edge of the wood sidewalk which ran along Market Street. A low pitched gable roof surmounted the building. At the entrance, or Market Street side, there was a low box with pyramidal top and modest wooden cross at the top of the gable; at the other end was a simple wooden belfry, consisting of a box on the gable top surmounted by the belfry proper framed in paired pilasters and crowned with a quasi-dome and another wooden cross. The side elevations were very plain; six tall windows framed in wood articulated the horizontal siding. (It is impossible to tell how the rear of the church was treated from the Fardon photograph.) The facade was the most ambitious section of the building, architecturally; it had a temple front formed from four Tuscan pilasters across the face of the building with a pediment in the gable above. A window, with wood framing strip pilasters and a plain strip cornice above, occupied each side of the front; and in the center, with wider spacing between pilaster, was a large double-leafed wood door, paneled of surface and framed with stripped Tuscan pilasters and a simple entablature above - consisting of plain architrave, frieze and cornice. The windows of the building were all double-hung, with nine panes in each section of the front windows. (It is impossible to count those on the sides from the old photograph.)

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what changes occurred during each move of the old church to its final resting place beside the present Holy Cross Church. Probably in 1873, due to their style, two windows with slightly arched tops were placed over the main door - breaking up the lower edge of the pediment and the entablature of the facade. At the present time (1963) these windows have squared tops and are filled with simple, bright colored glass panes. The principal original facade windows, at either side of the door, received new enrichments in the form of extra blacks under each framing strip pilaster and an extra moulding over the upper half of the window frame; a flattened pedimental piece was added to the cornice, with modified consoles at the sides - probably in 1873. These windows also now have colored glass panes. The present wooden cross is slightly more elaborate than the original one over the facade; the belfry has been entirely suppressed. Four wood buttresses are on the east side of the church; and the rear has been extensively modified to fit into new uses and adjacent buildings. A high stair leads up to the main front double door.

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The stylistic character of this structure is definitely Classical Revival, although it is (due to its modest nature) not so formally conceived as Roman and Greek Revival buildings in the East. The order used (Roman Tuscan, somewhat simplified) is the only distinctive Classical Revival facet of the building, although its unpretentious temple-like facade is clearly of this style - with necessary modifications to permit a cross rather than an acroterion at the apex of the facade gable, and a curious "back" belfry which may have had more visual logic in the original building due to some approach at that end of the structure. This direct, simple Classical Revival stylistic flavor was necessarily modified by the taste of the later 19th century (probably in 1873 when it was first moved), adding a few touches of the Mannered Italianate vogue in extra enrichments on the formerly plainly framed windows, and in a breaking through of the entablature and lower side of the pediment to provide room for windows of the later period.

INTERIOR

The basement floor, with a concrete floor and squared, chamfered wood pillars supporting the ceiling joists, is used for catechism classes; the large number of pillars make it difficult to use for active groups of people. The main floor has a modern wood wainscoting, six feet high, with plastered walls above. A coved plaster ceiling lies below the gable roof; two square skylights provide additional interior illumination, augmenting the present four side windows and the colored glass windows in front. The former sanctuary has been made into a raised stage (two feet high), of irregular shape. At the east side are cupboards and lavatories; beyond them a high corridor connects the main interior space with areas in the back of the building. Access to the present Holy Cross Church is through a door on the west side, south of the stage area. The hardwood floor was put in during the 1950's to make the former church usable for basketball and dancing; metal grillage guards the windows from ricocheting balls. (The principal entrance leads through a short entrance corridor, under the former choir; this choir area has been enclosed in metal grillwork to protect the windows, at the front of the building.) The old church has forced hot air heat and simple electric wiring.

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